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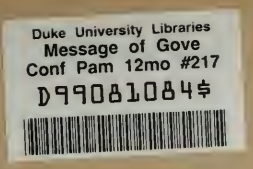
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MESSAGE

OF

GOVERNOR A. B. MOORE,

TO THE

Senate of Alabama,

January 14, 1861.

Senate---5000 Copies.

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MESSAGE.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
MONTGOMERY, ALA., January 14, 1861.

Gentlemen of the Senate:

Events of the utmost moment have rendered it necessary that your body should be assembled. At the last session of the General Assembly, Joint Resolutions were adopted, making it my duty, in the event of the election of a President by the Black Republican party of the United States, to issue my proclamation to the qualified voters "to elect delegates to a convention of the State, to consider, determine and do whatever in the opinion of said convention, the rights, interests, and honor of the State of Alabama required to be done for their protection."

The result of the election, by the popular vote, clearly manifested the certainty of the election of their candidate by that party, and on the 6th day of December, 1860, he was elected by a majority of the electoral vote of the United States. The contingency provided for in the Joint Resolutions having occurred, I felt it my duty to obey their instructions at the earliest moment afterwards, and on the 7th day of December, 1860, issued my proclamation accordingly, and also issued to the Sheriffs of the several counties in the State, the necessary writs of election, to be held on the 24th day of December last.

Before this convention assembled, great and important changes had taken place in public affairs, and especially in some of the Southern States. South Carolina, acting under a sense of the common wrong and threatened danger to her sister slaveholding States, in the exercise of her sovereignty, in a convention of her people, on the

20th day of December, 1860, repealed the ordinance by which she ratified the Constitution of the United States, as the compact of Union between herself and the other States, and resumed all the powers, which, by that compact, she delegated to the Government of the United States. Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, and Louisiana, also called conventions of their people, to consider of the exigencies pressing upon them—and the two first have followed the example of South Carolina, and withdrawn from the union with the United States, and there can be no question that the others will do the same.

The action of the people of Alabama in their convention, in withdrawing from the Federal Union is already known to you. This exercise of the sovereign power of the State, "to protect the rights, interests and honor" of her people, in my opinion, must be regarded as one of wisdom, and indeed of political necessity. The rights of the State, and the interests of her citizens, were no longer protected in the Union, and unless it was determined to abandon all hope of their preservation, no other resource was left than to withdraw from the Union, and throw off a government that failed to secure them.

Whatever differences of opinion may have existed as to the proper course of the State, it gives me pleasure to say that I have the strongest assurances that they will all cease, and that all the citizens of the State, in obedience to this organic law of the sovereign power, will sacrifice their objections on the altar of their country, and with one heart, sustain the State in this great movement of deliverance and liberty. I believe it will require all the courage, fortitude and patriotism of her sons to meet and overcome the approaching storm; but I have an abiding confidence that they will prove themselves equal to the emergency, and deserving the great destiny that awaits them in the future. The events that occurred in the harbor of Charleston, after the secession of South Carolina, are matters of history. The accounts, received from Washington, all tended to induce the conviction that the Government of the United States intended to adopt a system of coercion against all the States that might se-

cede from the Union. Gov. Brown, of Georgia, acting upon this belief, seized upon Fort Pulaski, at the mouth of the Savannah river, in the name of the State of Georgia, and telegraphed me of that event. Satisfied that the State of Alabama would not remain in the Union, and in view of the indications of intention on the part of the Federal Government to coerce the seceding States, I could no longer hesitate as to the course my duty to the State required me to pursue. I could not wait until that Government had thrown troops into the Forts, commanding the entrance into the harbor of Mobile, and thus place that city and the State at the mercy of the ships of war of the United States. To regain possession of these posts would have cost the State thousands of treasure and the best blood of her sons. There were in the Arsenal of the United States at Mount Vernon, on the Alabama river, a large supply of powder and small arms, which might be used against the State. Acting under these considerations, I transmitted orders by telegraph on the night of 3d January, to Todd, Colonel, at Mobile, to take possession of Forts Morgan and Gaines, at the mouth of Mobile Harbor, and of the Arsenal at Mount Vernon, with all their arms, ammunition, and equipments, and hold them in the name of the State of Alabama. It gives me pleasure and pride to make known the gallantry and promptitude with which this order was responded to, by the officers and men selected for that purpose. The dispatch was sent from this place at 9 A. M., and the Forts, forty miles from Mobile, were taken possession of on the next night; and the Arsenal, some fifty miles from Mobile, was seized about day light next morning, and they are now held in the name of this State, by her volunteer troops. In the Forts were some hundred cannon—thirty-two and twenty-four pound guns; and in the Arsenal about 22,000 stand of small arms, and one hundred and fifty thousand pounds of powder. Of the small arms, about two thousand were Mississippi rifles, and the remainder muskets. I directed the officers in command at these posts to make out an accurate inventory of the arms and materials thus obtained. As soon as I was informed that these posts were in the pos-

See Journal Convention p 23

session of the troops of the State, I communicated the facts to the President of the United States, with a summary of the reasons which induced my action, to which he has not replied. If more specific information of the arms and conditions of the Forts is desired, I will furnish it with pleasure.

Early in December last I was urged to convoke the Legislature for the purpose, among others, of authorizing the banks of the State to suspend specie payments, in order to relieve the community in their embarrassed condition. I declined, at that time, to do so, for the reasons stated by me in an address to the people of the State, a copy of which address is hereto attached, and to which I beg to call your attention. In view of the condition of the State, and the absolute necessity of her having money, on her secession—and which event I confidently anticipated—I made arrangements with the two banks in Mobile, the Commercial Bank at Selma, the Central Bank at Montgomery, and the Eastern Bank at Eufaula, that they should, if required by the Legislature, furnish to the State a loan of one million of dollars, in specie or its equivalent.

I requested and urged upon them to suspend payments of specie for the purpose of furnishing the sum designated to the State, and to relieve the community, as far as possible, by such assistance as they would then be able to give. This amount of one million is to be advanced by the several banks, in proportion to their respective capitals. The two banks at Mobile agreed to advance a proportional part of the above sum, but declined to suspend. The Commercial Bank, the Central Bank, and the Eastern Bank, agreed to advance their respective proportions, and suspended specie payments, upon my promise to institute no proceedings against them, and to urge upon the General Assembly the propriety of its sustaining such suspensions. The circumstances under which these latter banks acted, and the motives which prompted them, commend their conduct to the approval of every patriotic citizen of the State, and I earnestly suggest that the Legislature, by legal enactments, sanction their suspension. I would further recommend that the other banks

of the State be severally authorized to suspend on lending to the State in specie, or its equivalent, a sum in proportion to their respective capitals, of like amount with that agreed to be furnished by the first named banks, and to be secured in like manner.

In the important change of the condition of the State, other and more enlarged duties devolve upon you for consideration. From all the indications, it is to be inferred that this State must maintain her sovereignty and independence by force of arms. The Government of the United States, in its infatuation, seems determined to use force against some or all of the seceding States. Alabama cannot expect to escape while her sister States are subjected to this last argument of Kings. Even if no hostile demonstration was made against her, it would not become her dignity or honor, or interest to stand by and see the power of the Government of the United States used to crush a single slaveholding State. The instincts of self-preservation would compel Alabama to aid such slaveholding State, engaged in the same cause, and having the same destiny, with all the means in her power. We desire peace with all the world, and especially with the Government of the United States, and the other States composing the United States. To obtain permanent peace and security of our rights, we withdraw from the Union; but the best way to obtain these is to be prepared for war, and if the dread alternative is presented, not to shrink from the contest, but, meeting it as freemen, leave the consequences to that Being, who holds in His hands alike the destiny of men and nations.

I would recommend, then, that the State of Alabama be placed, at as early a period as practicable upon the most efficient war footing. The first requisites of this condition are money, men and arms. I have already indicated that a loan of one million of dollars has been secured from the banks. I would recommend that you adopt the necessary steps to have this agreement consummated. I would further recommend that the State borrow another million of dollars, on her bonds in sums of five hundred and one thousand dollars each, bearing interest at eight per cent., with the interest payable annually, and

to be sold within the State at par—the bonds payable in not less than ten years. I would also advise that Executors, Administrators, Guardians, and all other trustees, having trust funds to invest, be authorized to invest such funds in these bonds. Not only will these securities be sought after for investment, but thousands of patriotic hearts, who have not the ability of the noble sons of South Carolina to make gratuitous contributions, will thus be enabled to throw in their mite for the support of the same glorious cause.

I would also suggest that the General Assembly make provision for raising, arming, and officering, a regular force of troops of the State, and adopt such army regulations therefor as may be necessary. The regulations for the army of the United States might form a basis for the system. Enlistments for twelve months, two years, or to the close of hostilities, might be adopted, to be ended when the necessity for their services shall cease. In the latter case, it might be well to provide, when they are discharged, for a bounty to be paid them.

The mode of furnishing officers for such a force is one of some difficulty. Whether the commissioned officers should be selected by the men, over whom they are to exercise command, or be appointed in some other way, I leave to the wisdom of your bodies. But I would recommend where companies, battalions or regiments, offer their services as such, to serve for the time specified in the regulations, that they be allowed to select their own commissioned officers.

In making this suggestion for a regular force, I am not to be understood as expressing a want of confidence in the patriotism of our militia, and especially the volunteers. Their bravery and patriotism have been too well established to entertain a doubt that they would acquit themselves, on all proper occasions, in such manner as to add increased honor to their acheivements in the field. Experience has proved, that however efficient such troops are for sudden occasions or short campaigns, it will not do to rely upon them to sustain a long, protracted contest. The greatest difficulties experienced by General Washington in the Revolutionary war, and by General

Jackson in his Creek campaigns, arose from the expiration of the term of service of the militia under their commands. Moreover, it is probable that the principal service demanded by the State from her troops will be in garrison, and he who has seen service of that character knows how tedious and irksome such a life is to the citizen soldier.

As to the various appropriations, and mode of disbursing the sums raised on the bonds of the State, I leave that to your consideration. In connection with the above subjects, I can not too earnestly impress upon you the importance of the appointment of a Military Board.—With my inexperience in military affairs, and the inefficient military organization of the State, such a body is imperatively demanded in the present exigency. I am too sensible of my deficiency in military matters to make any suggestion as to the power and duties of such a board, but you have in your bodies military men, who understand and can define the necessary extent of their powers. I would, however, recommend that it consist of four persons, to be selected by the Legislature, or in such other manner as may be deemed best by you, with such rank and pay as would be commensurate with their duties.

The condition of many families of the poorer classes in the State, demand consideration. That there will be much suffering, and privation, and perhaps starvation, is greatly to be feared, unless some provision against these contingencies is made by the Legislature. After an anxious consideration on this subject, I would recommend that the Court of County Commissioners of each county be empowered to levy and collect a tax, in their several counties, for the purpose of raising funds to purchase food for their suffering population, and to appoint an agent to make the purchases. If it is found this tax cannot be collected in time for the relief of the suffering, then to pledge the public property of the county by mortgage or otherwise, for money to be borrowed for that purpose. But, in no event, is this public property to be disposed of, under such mortgage or other pledge, until ample time has been given for the collection of such

tax; and when collected, it shall be applied to the extinguishment of such debt of the county. The details of this measure I leave to your consideration.

I am compelled by the necessities of this department to suggest that the Governor have the authority to appoint two Secretaries. The duties devolving upon the office, at this time, leave the Executive no leisure but to direct. The correspondence is voluminous, and the duty of attending to that office is arduous. They should be paid a salary by the State quarterly, with power in the Executive, at the end of any quarter, to discharge them, when their services should be no longer needed; or when he thought necessary to discharge such as he thought proper, and appoint others in their stead.

I am also compelled to call your attention to the increase of the contingent fund. Under ordinary circumstances, the amount under the present law, at the control of the Executive, would be ample, but the present emergency requires that this sum of $12,000 be increased; and I recommend that thirteen thousand dollars more be added, making this fund the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars.

At your last session, the General Assembly made an appropriation for the purchase of arms and ammunition, under the direction of this department. I have purchased about nine thousand stand of small arms, ten brass rifled cannon, (six pounders,) and two Columbiads; twenty thousand pounds of lead, seven hundred kegs of powder, of twenty-eight pounds each, and one million five hundred thousand caps. The cannon have not yet arrived, but I am expecting them daily.

The Convention on the —— inst., authorized me to dispatch troops from this State to aid the State of Florida in taking possession of the Forts at the mouth of Pensacola Harbor. Accordingly on the —— inst., I ordered three hundred men from Mobile by water, and dispatched five companies, under the command of Col. Lomax, by railroad from this place, to proceed to Pensacola. After the troops left here I received information, that on the night of the —— inst., all the positions on the west side of Pensacola Bay were abandoned by the forces of the

United States, which had been concentrated at Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island. The occupation of this Fort enables them to command the entrance to the bay and harbor of Pensacola; and as the troops from Mobile were to approach by water, I directed them, by telegraph, to proceed no further in the expedition. The troops from this place arrived at Pensacola on the night of the —— inst., and are now encamped there. If it should be deemed practicable, they will aid in storming Fort Pickens, and for that purpose they remain there. I also had intelligence that a considerable force of ships of war and troops of the United States had been ordered to rendezvous at Pensacola, and probably to make a demonstration on the Forts at the mouth of Mobile Bay, or some other point in that vicinity. I therefore ordered five other companies to Mobile to aid in defending whatever point may be assailed.

Your attention is called to the necessity of making some provision for the payment of the expenses of these expeditions.

In connection with the subject of placing the State in an efficient state to protect herself, I have a suggestion to make, which I thought prudent to reserve for a separate and secret communication, and which I am ready to make, when your bodies are ready to receive it.

In closing this message, I cannot but invoke the blessings of the Most High and Omniscient God upon all your deliberations, and that we may be saved from the horrors of war and enjoy the blessings of peace—that our liberties may be preserved, and that our beloved State may enjoy an uninterrupted career of prosperity and greatness.

A. B. MOORE.

LETTER FROM GOV. MOORE

ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE BANKS.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
Montgomery, Ala., Dec. 17, 1860.

To the People of Alabama:

Strong appeals have been made to me, by many citizens from different sections of the State, to convene the Legislature for the purpose of providing the ways and means of protecting the interests and honor of the State in the impending crisis; and for the further purpose of authorizing the banks to suspend specie payments, to enable them to furnish greater facilities for moving the cotton crop, and thus relieve, to some extent, the embarrassed condition of the cotton market, and the people. These appeals were made by those, whose opinions are entitled to the highest respect, and are disconnected with the banks, either as directors or stockholders. After giving to the subject the fullest consideration, and viewing it in all its bearings, I determined not to convene the Legislature, for reasons which I will now give.

I did not doubt, and do not now, that the convention, to meet on the 7th January, will determine that Alabama shall withdraw from the present Union, at an early day.

Should this contingency occur, it will be necessary forthwith, to convene the Legislature to provide for whatever the action of the convention may render necessary, in the way of legislation. The imposition upon the State, of the expense of the convention, and two extra session of the Legislature at this time, when economy is a matter of the highest consideration, ought to be avoided, if it could be done consistently with the public inter-

ests. If the Legislature could anticipate the action of the convention, and provide for it, it would supersede the necessity of convening, after the convention shall have acted; but this would be impossible.

It was my opinion, that if I issued a proclamation calling an extra session of the Legislature, every one would believe that the object, in part, was to authorize the banks to suspend specie payments. This would have caused an immediate run upon them, and would, in a great measure, have exhausted their specie, and thus rendered them unable to aid the State in her emergency, or relieve the people.

It appeared to me that these difficulties could be avoided, by the banks and myself assuming responsibilities, which never should be done under any other circumstances. I considered it a matter of the utmost importance that the specie, in the vaults of the banks, should be kept there, so far as it could be done, in order to aid the State in providing the means to sustain herself in the approaching crisis. It would be inexpedient, at such a time, to tax the people, and State bonds could not now be sold, except at a great sacrifice. I considered it the duty of banks, upon whom extraordinary privileges had been conferred, to come to the aid of the State in her hour of need, and therefore determined to request them, at the same time, to suspend specie payments, and retain their specie for the benefit and security of the State, so far as might be necessary.

In this way, a run upon the banks would be avoided, and they would remain in a condition to relieve the State from immediately taxing her people, or selling bonds at a heavy discount; and render unnecessary an extra session of the Legislature, before the meeting of the convention.

The extension of relief to the people, in selling their cotton crops, would follow as an incident. In consideration of the premises, I addressed to each of the banks a letter, of which the following is a copy:

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
Montgomery, Ala., Dec. 4, 1860.

To the President and Directors of the
Central Bank of Alabama, Montgomery, Ala.:

GENTLEMEN:—The peculiar and extraordinary state of public affairs and the interest of the State, make it a matter of State necessity to retain in the vaults of the banks all the gold and silver in their possession.

From present prospects, there can scarcely be a doubt that Alabama will secede from the Union before the 4th day of March next. Should that contingency occur, it will be necessary for the State to raise not less than a million of dollars in specie, or its equivalent. Under the circumstances which surround us, we could not sell State bonds, either in the North or in Europe, except at a ruinous discount; and it would be inexpedient to tax the people immediately for that purpose. How then can the State secure the money, that may be necessary, in her emergency?

But one practicable plan now presents itself to my mind, and that is to call upon the banks of the State to come up to her aid. The course of events, and the suspension of the South Carolina and Georgia banks, will create more or less uneasiness in the minds of bill holders, and will induce many of them to draw the specie from the banks to the extent of the notes they may hold, and thus render the banks unable to aid the State, as they otherwise could do.

I am strongly urged from various parts of the State to convene the Legislature, for the purpose of authorizing the banks to suspend specie payments, and thus enable them to retain their specie for the purposes suggested.

I have reflected much and anxiously upon the subject. I am satisfied, were I to convene the Legislature for the purpose stated, that it would produce a run on the banks, and in a great measure exhaust their specie and defeat the object I have in view.

With the view, then, of enabling the banks to retain their specie for the purpose aforesaid, I deem it my duty, under the circumstances, to advise and request them to suspend, all at the same time.

The high and patriotic motives which would induce the act, would sustain the banks and me. There can be no doubt that the convention and Legislature, soon to meet, will sustain and legalize the act. I will sanction it, and will institute no proceedings against them; and in my message to the Legislature and convention will urge them to sanction the act, which I am sure they will do.

If need be, after the suspension, I will write an address to the people of the State, stating the facts and circumstances under which the step was taken. I am satisfied that the banks are in a sound condition, and can maintain it through the present crisis; but it will render them unable to give the State that aid she will need.

I have written similar letters to all the banks. The contents of this communication are respectfully submitted to your consideration.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. B. MOORE.

At my suggestion and request, and for the purposes stated in my letter, the Commercial Bank at Selma, the Central Bank at Montgomery, and the Eastern Bank at Eufaula, suspended this day. It is due to those banks that I should say (being advised of their condition) that they are able to sustain themselves through the crisis, and that they have taken this important step with the high and patriotic motive of sustaining the State, as shown by the response of each of them to my letter. Their letters are filed in my office, and would have been published but for the length they would give this communication.

There is no necessity for any depreciation in their notes, as there can be no question of their solvency.

The circumstances under which they have suspended, should relieve them from any censure. If censure is to fall upon any one, it should be upon me, and I rely for my justification upon the manifest propriety and necessity of the act, as well as the motives which induced it. The Bank of Mobile, and the Southern Bank of Alabama decline to suspend, but patriotically pledge themselves to raise their proportion of the amount suggested in my letter, should there be a necessity for it. These two banks,

being located in Mobile, can procure specie and exchange with more facility than the banks in the interior, and are not so liable to be prejudiced by the suspended banks of South Carolina and Georgia. Hence their ability to aid the State without suspending specie payments.

The Northern Bank at Huntsville, also declines to suspend, on account of peculiar circumstances which surround it.

I have now briefly stated the circumstances and facts, connected with the suspension of three of our banks, in accordance with the promise contained in my letter, and hope they will be satisfactory to the enlightened and patriotic people of Alabama, for whose benefit this great responsibility has been assumed. A. B. MOORE.

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